

# ***Giving Delaware County Sports the Coverage They Deserve***

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

By

*Josh Shelton*

**Thesis Advisor**

*Suzy Smith*

**Ball State University**

**Muncie, Indiana**

*April 2019*

**Expected Date of Graduation**

*May 2019*

## **Abstract**

Stories are everywhere and it just takes a little digging to find them, especially when it comes to the compelling stories that surround Delaware County high school sports. While Indiana may be a basketball state, Friday night battles on the gridiron still draw huge crowds on a clear night or in pouring down rain. This project was meant to highlight those athletes and coaches who give it their all every Friday night as they compete against some of the toughest opponents in the state. Delaware County football has some incredible athletes and their performances don't always get the same recognition they deserve, so hopefully this project is able to showcase the talent these athletes have.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my advisor Suzy Smith for helping me get this project off the ground and keeping me on track and motivated through my final years. Her guidance both through this project and my college career have been invaluable in preparing me for the future.

I want to thank my mom and dad for being my rocks throughout college and encouraging me to be the best version of myself I could. They're pretty great.

I also want to thank the coaches at the schools I covered for this project, Christopher Overholt (Delta High School), Mike Wilhelm (Yorktown High School), Kyle York (New Castle High School), and Brad Hess (Wes-Del High School). They were incredibly helpful whenever I came to film and interview and always thanked me for coming out and covering their games. They made this project so much fun and I was incredibly lucky to work with such a great group of men.

## Process Analysis Statement

When I started this project, I had no idea what kind of impact it would have on the community I had been covering for three years. I knew the sports fans were passionate, the players fiercely competitive and the coaches totally committed to their respective programs. I also knew from my time at Ball State that these football programs didn't receive the media coverage they deserved. There were stories to be told and games to be featured about these Delaware County football programs, they just needed an outlet to be told.

Throughout my college career at Ball State, one thing has been drilled into my head from various teachers in the NEWS curriculum. It wasn't just the "rule of thirds" or AP Style or even the importance of fact checking (although it is quite important). The most important lesson that every teacher wanted us to walk away with is that there is a difference between a journalist and a reporter. A reporter reports, which is to mean all they do is report the facts. There is no context in a report, just simply a collection of statements, facts, and figures. A report doesn't move someone. A journalist goes beyond the report, they tell stories. A story has a beginning, middle, and end. It has characters and emotion because it is a story. Stories move people because they can find themselves in those characters, just as they would in a Netflix original or *New York Times* bestseller.

With this honors thesis project, my intentions were to bring some of these characters to the forefront of the project. Some of the most driven coaches in Indiana coach here in Delaware County and motivate the young men on their football team not only to become better athletes, but also better men and role models in the community. I worked closely with them over the years and enjoyed going to games and practices because there was more than a

coach and player relationship on the sidelines. While they were still calling plays and strategizing to win games, I could see there was something more. The coaches were almost always the first person to an injured player on the field, the first person to talk to a player who was beginning to lose control of their emotions, and the first person to congratulate an athlete who made a big play. They were always their players' champions and I knew they would be the best to tell the stories of their programs, both as coaches and as the role models they have become to their players.

The starting point was the hardest place to find even though I had a general idea of what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to record everything on video so I could capture the moments live and allow people to see them over and over again. Eventually it all ended up here for anyone and everyone to see ([dascoop.joshsheltonlive.com](https://dascoop.joshsheltonlive.com)). The matter at hand was how to carry out and tell the stories of Delaware County's Friday night lights. I reached out to Athletic Directors to inform them of my project as soon as I was granted approval to lay down the basis of the project. I already had a good rapport with many of the athletic directors and coaches I was intending to focus on, because of I had covered their games in previous years. This helped as I worked with them to set guidelines and layout the idea behind my project. I was definitely thankful for their help because as I communicated with them the plan started to unfold. I didn't want to stretch myself too thin, so I had decided to focus on one school every week to give the stories the time they deserved.

I wanted to plan out as much as I could, so I printed out the schedules of the Delaware County high schools that had football teams and started to create my own story schedule. I wanted to prioritize games that had multiple Delaware County teams in the mix so that I could

maximize coverage and of course efficiency. From there I was able to highlight games that I would be attending and set myself a concrete schedule to carry out my project. With a solid idea of when and where I would be for certain nights, the creative aspects came easy.

One of the most challenging parts wasn't standing in the cold rain to film some of these games (but believe me, we will get to that), the most challenging part was wanting to build a website to host this project, but not really knowing how to actually go about building a site. Luckily, I was enrolled in an interactive media class where I learned an incredible amount about website design *and* how to actually build the site. I had to be patient, which isn't always easy for me because I like to apply my ideas right away when they pop into my head, but I didn't have the tools to bring my ideas to life. Slowly throughout the fall semester I was learning how to build a website that looked good and functioned smoothly and the very end of the semester culminated in having the proper skills to bring my ideas that had been rattling around in my head to the World Wide Web. I definitely was able to push myself to be more patient and understanding even when I didn't have all the skills needed to create the product I wanted. I could have easily made a basic blog site with no layout structure or visually appealing aspects, but instead I waited, learned, and then executed creation of a website I was both proud of and thought showcased the amount of time and energy I had put into this project.

I was confident in my ability to complete most of the other skills I believed to be crucial to the project. My skills in videography, writing, interviewing, interpersonal communications, and creativity came easily because I had been honing them throughout my college career, especially in student media. Many of the challenges I faced were because of on my lack of patience (as discussed earlier) and the variability of the project week-to-week. As I said

previously, I spent some games in cold rain where a mere degree drop in temperature would mean snow and not rain, and those events were difficult not because I covered myself and my equipment in two different shopping bags with holes torn out of them to allow me to access controls and film in the rain, but because it tested me. I won't lie to any of you reading this, there were nights that I thought maybe I should just use the footage I had, wait for the end of the game in the warm, dry press box, and then interview the coaches at the end of the game, to avoid any more time in the rain, but I also had to remember this project wasn't just so I could get college credit and graduate with honors. Sure, that is a great perk, but this wasn't about me, it was about the stories of the people on the field, the one's with muddy jerseys and soggy socks shivering on the sidelines but giving it their all. They were the reasons I was there, losing feeling in my hands and having to stretch after every other play as my muscles tensed in the chilly conditions.

One thing I never anticipated was the amount of encouragement I would be getting from coaches and even players and fans when I was done shooting and heading back to my car to go edit. When I was done filming and a coach would thank me, that's all I ever expected, but when a coach would tell me how much the coverage meant to him and his team and ask if I needed help carrying equipment, it made my night. One thing I learned was just how much even the smallest gesture or comment means. I have tried to apply that lesson in my everyday life, using this project as a way to grow as a person and let people know when they're doing a good job, or remind them when things are getting difficult that if what they're doing affects at least one person in a positive way, then they've changed the world. That's something that has helped motivate me and hopefully it's something that other people can think about to help

them make that extra push when they're ready to call it quits or when they are thinking their work has no meaning.

After the games were done, it would be on to the interviews with the coaches. My favorite part of the interviews was when I had to throw out the questions I had planned because of what a coach said in one of his answers. I'm lucky because these coaches gave me straight answers, whether that was just who they are or if it was because they felt comfortable with me. I think it has more to do with a level of mutual respect, but I keep my questions straight forward as well. If something didn't work for them throughout the game, I'd ask them about it, and they would tell me. I was also able to ask follow-up questions. I grew as an active listener because doing so created a product that was truthful and more informed. Having the ability to clarify and confirm information by asking a more probing question usually resulted in better answers and helped the project. I knew the story that needed to be told because the coaches gave me the information that needed to be shared. With both active listening and mutual respect also comes an understanding of when and what NOT to ask a coach. As much as people love to play "armchair quarterback" and question a coach's decision on a particular play, there are better ways to ask those questions. Instead of asking, "why did you choose to go for it on fourth and five?" the best way to ask that question is "what did you see in that situation on fourth and five?" Asking the question in that manner sounds far less accusatory and allows the coach to explain their thought process and other factors that contributed to their decision. In my experience, asking the question in this manner shows the coach respect and they don't answer in a defensive manner.

Once the games were filmed, the questions asked, and the camera equipment packed and in the car, it's time to head back home. Now comes one of the most important parts of the storytelling process, the editing. Here is where all the bits and pieces that have been collected throughout the night become a whole. The first thing I always do is find the soundbites from the coaches that capture the essence of the game. There are two things I consider first when choosing these soundbites: one, "what made this one stand out from any other football game that would be going on tonight?" and two, "was there something the coach said that was unusual or brought emotion to the game?" Maybe a big play that will be the focal point of the story. Once I have the idea of the story, it was time to pull footage. As the soundbites are chosen the story starts to take shape as they are the main pieces of fabric for the story I'm weaving. The other parts come from the footage of the game, they are the details that add texture to the fabric and the piece as a whole. The last portion is my voice over that acts as the stitching that brings all the pieces together. It acts as the bridge between soundbites and creates a smooth transition between ideas.

I also like to focus on the sounds of the game because often a story can be told through those natural sounds caught through the camera's microphone. A crowd's cheers or jeers, a coach's commands, or even the crunch of pads hitting pads can help propel the story of the game. I like to try and find those moments through the footage I watch to add layers to the piece that help elevate the main point.

This project took an incredible amount of effort from the beginning to the end and I am quite pleased with the final product. I believe this project does a good job of capturing the feel of Friday night football in Delaware County. I learned more about my abilities as a storyteller



and myself as a person. I grew more patient and more methodical in my approaches to maximize efficiency and make sure I didn't make any silly mistakes that would hurt my credibility as a journalist. I also found that I could help motivate others to strive for their goals and encourage them to do their best work.

## Digital Supplements



<http://dascoop.joshsheltonlive.com/>



Office of Research Integrity  
Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
2000 University Avenue  
Muncie, IN 47306-0155  
Phone: 765-285-5070

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DATE: August 27, 2018

TO: Joshua Shelton

FROM: Ball State University IRB

RE: IRB protocol # 1243128-1

TITLE: Giving Delaware County Sports the Coverage They Deserve

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: **DETERMINATION OF NOT HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH**

DECISION DATE: August 27, 2018

REVIEW TYPE: Administrative Review

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The Institutional Review Board received the above protocol. After review and consideration, the IRB concluded that this project does not meet the definition of 'research with human subjects' at this time, as specified by federal regulations at 45 CFR 46.

**Research:** A systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.

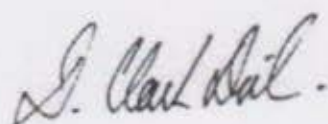
*(Activities which meet this definition constitute research for purposes of this policy, whether or not they are conducted or supported under a program which is considered research for other purposes.)*

**Human Subject:** A living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains: (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual or (2) identifiable private information.

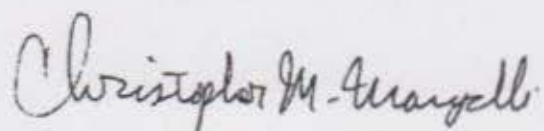
Consequently, this project does not require IRB approval as submitted. The IRB accepts this information for our records and will retain it in our files. Thank you for providing the IRB with these materials for review. Please contact the Office of Research Integrity if any details of the study are to change so that the IRB may reconsider the protocol, if necessary.

If you have any questions regarding this decision or would like to respond in person, please contact the Office of Research Integrity.

Please note: Since you are interviewing minors, it is important to check in with the policies of the schools you are recruiting from and see what their requirements are for recording and posting video of their students. In addition, note that the age of consent for research activity in Indiana is 18.



D. Clark Dickin, PhD/Chair  
Institutional Review Board



Christopher Mangelli, JD, MS, MEd, CIP/  
Director  
Office of Research Integrity



## **Study Title: Giving Delaware County Sports the Coverage They Deserve**

### **Study Purpose and Rationale**

The purpose of this project is to give high school athletes in the Delaware County area an opportunity to receive news coverage that they wouldn't normally receive from Ball State media outlets or Muncie media outlets. Delaware County sports do not receive the attention that Ball State sports do, despite there being a Muncie online and written publication. The idea for this project is to tell the stories of high school athletes that would otherwise go unheard. There is a vast field for human interest's stories and sports coverage for the Delaware County area.

### **Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**

You must be a Delaware County high school student-athlete (freshman to senior year in school) or be a coach of the sports team being covered.

### **Participation Procedures and Duration**

You will be interviewed and filmed during/after practices and games in order to create both preview stories and post-game stories to be shown on a designated website. The duration of interviews will not typically exceed 10 minutes unless otherwise agreed for a long-form interview beforehand.

### **Audio or Video Tapes**

All interviews will be done on camera and produced in video formats. If interviews are being used for a print story, the interview will be recorded using an audio recorder in order to ensure accuracy of the quotes. Final products of the stories will be kept indefinitely on the host website to allow participants and others to interact with the stories at any point in time.

### **Data Confidentiality or Anonymity**

Your interviews will not be confidential, nor will anonymity be provided. All final products will be posted for the public to view. Everything in this project is conducted as a news organization would complete a story.

### **Storage of Data and Data Retention Period**

Raw data will be stored on an external hard drive and not accessible to anyone but the PI and the faculty advisor. All finished products will be hosted on the created website for the thesis project. Following the completion of the project, all raw footage will be deleted from the external hard drive. The hosting website, however, will remain running indefinitely.

### **Risks or Discomforts**

There are no perceived risks for participating in this study.

### **Who to Contact Should You Experience Any Negative Effects from Participating in this Study**

There are no perceived negative effects for participating in this study.

### **Benefits**

There are no perceived benefits for participating in this study.

### **Voluntary Participation**

"Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study."

### **IRB Contact Information**

For one's rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070 or at [irb@bsu.edu](mailto:irb@bsu.edu).

**Study Title: Giving Delaware County Sports the Coverage They Deserve**

**Consent**

I, Brad Hess, agree to participate in this research project entitled, **(Study Title)** I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

Brad Hess

Participant's Signature

9-28-18

Date

**Researcher Contact Information**

Principal Investigator:

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Honors College & Telecommunications  
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Faculty Supervisor:

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\*\*\*\*\*

**Consent**

I, Christopher Overholt, agree to participate in this research project entitled, **(Study Title)** I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

Christopher Overholt

Participant's Signature

9/5/18

Date

**Researcher Contact Information**

Principal Investigator:

Joshua Shelton, Student  
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Muncie, IN 47306  
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Email: [jjshelton@bsu.edu](mailto:jjshelton@bsu.edu)

Faculty Supervisor:

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Email: [sismith@bsu.edu](mailto:sismith@bsu.edu)



## **Study Title: Giving Delaware County Sports the Coverage They Deserve**

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\*\*\*\*\*

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I, Mike Wilhelm, agree to participate in this research project entitled, **(Study Title)** I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

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Mike Wilhelm

9/6/18

Participant's Signature

Date

**Researcher Contact Information**

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Honors College & Telecommunications  
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\*\*\*\*\*

**Consent**

I, Kyle York, agree to participate in this research project entitled, **(Study Title)** I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

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Kyle York

Participant's Signature

9/17/18

Date

**Researcher Contact Information**

Principal Investigator:

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*There are no perceived negative effects for participating in this study.*

### **Benefits**

*There are no perceived benefits for participating in this study.*

### **Voluntary Participation**

*"Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study."*

### **IRB Contact Information**

*For one's rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070 or at [irb@bsu.edu](mailto:irb@bsu.edu).*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Consent**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in this research project entitled, **(Study Title)** I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Researcher Contact Information**

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### Sample Questions for the Thesis Project

*Interviews will semi-structured and questions will be modified on a weekly basis based on current events and the progression of the season.*

*Here are some examples of questions to be asked:*

What has your team done this week to prepare for your opponent?

Who has stepped up in practice over the past few weeks and emerged as a leader?

Who will be the leader this year for your team?

What have you done differently this year/week from last year/week?

What challenges does this week's opponent pose?

Where are your team's strengths and weaknesses on the field?

What parts of your game have you worked on in the offseason?





Office of Research Integrity  
Example Letter of Support

Muncie, Indiana 47306-0155  
765-285-5070  
765-285-5034

To: Joshua Shelton

Re: Giving Delaware County Sports the Coverage They Deserve

Date: **(DATE WRITTEN)**

You have permission to interview, collect information, film, etc. "Giving Delaware County Sports the Coverage They Deserve" to the **NAME OF INSTITUTION, DATE**. You also have permission to be on the school grounds and sports facilities during practices and games in order to collect footage and interviews necessary for the completion of "Giving Delaware County Sports the Coverage They Deserve".

Signature from someone of authority,

Signature,

**(Place your address and contact information below)**

Research Integrity Administrator  
Ball State University  
Office of Research Integrity  
2000 University Avenue  
Muncie, IN 47306  
765-285-5034  
[www.bsu.edu/researchintegrity](http://www.bsu.edu/researchintegrity)